

Art from the Unknown

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January 2000 Vol. 7 No 1

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the spare change magazine

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Art from the Unknown

How many homeless Edmontonians?

Our Voice

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The Warrior in Town

Chris Norgard

For Mike (not his real name), who was "born and raised in the prison system", joining an Aboriginal gang fulfilled his life-long desire to belong.

"I'm 44 years old," he said. "Since I was 13, I was in juvenile, then provincial then federal prisons. I'm always by myself. I needed a sense of belonging. Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to be part of some kind of gang."

Mike met the head of the Manitoba Warriors while he was doing time, and became a member. He now wears the Warrior colours - a black armband around his left upper arm. The armband is worn under his clothing to "avoid being busted by the cops".

Mike is proud of the Warriors. "It's (the gang) just a brotherhood. We party, we joke, we laugh - man, we got all kinds of money. But we never ask each other for money. Still, as a Warrior, I'm supposed to lay down my life for my colours. And guns, sometimes I think we put the army to shame."

He said they have a code, "You never fool with another Warrior's woman, and you never hit a woman."

Although there is a club house, and the Warriors have several residences where he could live, Mike prefers to be independent.

"They never ask me to do anything," he said. "I can walk out any time. I just have to say 'Hey Brothers I want to leave' and take off my colours."

Mike said as well as the Manitoba Warriors, there are other branches of Warriors including the Alberta Warriors and the Muskachees Warriors out of Hobeema. The Warriors started through the penitentiary system and expanded to Alberta about six years ago. As well, there are a number of other Aboriginal gangs in Edmonton including the Indian Posse, Red Alert, North Side Boys, the Crypt and others.

"The only ones we are out against are the Indian Posse," said Mike. They have truces with the others as well as with the Hell's Angels.

"We have our own districts for the drug trade," he said. "Each gang has their own lines they can't cross." He said although there

are some clashes, the gangs are not dangerous to the public.

"We just let people be, unless they come on to a Warrior. Then we're there for each other. Otherwise, it's all between gangs," he said. "They're fighting for the drug trade and the prostitution trade. It's all about money. That's the bottom line."

Mike said there are meetings between the chiefs, but as a member he is not required to attend. The chiefs travel from place to place controlling the whole operation.

The muscles of the Warriors are the 'strikers'. "They wear white and black headbands," said Mike. "They are out to prove them-

"They never ask me to do anything," he said. "I can walk out any time. I just have to say 'Hey Brothers I want to leave' and take off my colours."

selves. They do the dirty work. They're the enforcers. They take orders from the main leaders to earn their colours."

Sergeant Bryan Boulanger of the Edmonton City Police said the police are concerned about the number of Aboriginal gangs they see evolving in Edmonton and that they "are concerned when any group becomes involved in criminal activity and we have evidence of an organized crime scenario." He would not mention any gang by name.

Boulanger said people join gangs because "they are looking for a sense of identity or because they have a lack of direction in their lives. They join for the same reason other members of society join service clubs, churches or sports groups, but in joining a gang "once they get inside, they become part of the criminal activity."

Boulanger said that not all the recruiting into gangs is "by friendly persuasion, but through threats of harm. Some people join out of fear."

"We know that although the Aboriginal community considers itself to be one big brotherhood, there are different factions," he said. "We've had criminal deaths related to street gang activity, but it's hard to prove."

Boulanger said the gangs have evolved through the correctional system. Inmates transferred to Edmonton started new branches of their gangs here; they are also expanding into eastern Canada.

While Mike said the Warriors number 1200, Boulanger estimates the actual number as closer to 250 members with a large number of associates.

Boulanger said the Aboriginal gangs in Edmonton are patterned after the American street gangs, but there doesn't appear to be turf involved.

"What they have done is affected the trappings and postures of American street gangs with hand signals, physical posturing, organizational set-up and colours, but they're frequenting the same territory."

He said that could be unfortunate for someone who could suffer the consequences of inadvertently wearing the wrong colours.

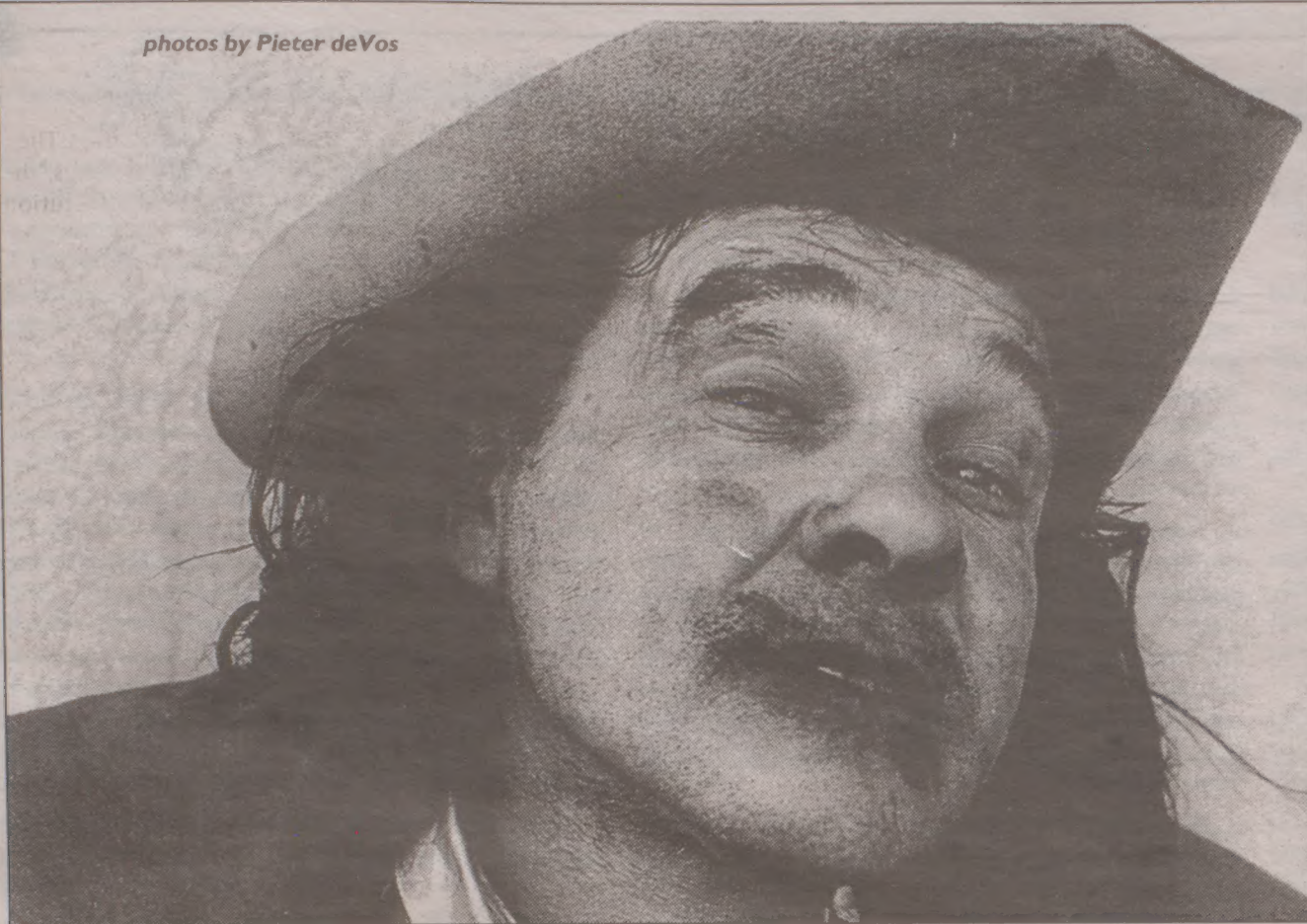
He also sees the potential threat of a clash between Aboriginal street gangs and other gangs.

"All groups are competing for the same dollars so a possibility exists that at any time the status quo could be disrupted and we could have a gang war that includes the Asian gangs and the outlaw motorcycle gangs," he said. ♦



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photos by Pieter deVos



Homelessness on the rise and here comes the money?

"Anytime you have anywhere close to a thousand people homeless, it's terrible," says city Councillor Jim Taylor, co-chair of last year's task force on homelessness.

Last year 836 people were discovered living homeless in Edmonton. This year that number has increased to 1114 and probably more.

"I think the numbers this year were indicative of an improvement in the count," claims Sundari Devam, who is the director of Housing for the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation. "It went much smoother and there were more volunteers."

This year, much like last, there was some concern that places and people weren't being accessed, leaving the final tally incomplete.

"There needs to be more people who have had experience being homeless involved with the count. They know where homeless people go, so they know where to look for them," says Gary Trudel who is formerly homeless and now advocates on behalf of the poor. "This year they had volunteers who were scared to go into an alley. What good does that do? There could be homeless people living in that alley, but if someone is too scared to go into it, we'll never know and they don't get counted. It makes sense to involve the right people, people with experience, not government bureaucrats out for a leisurely walk. They had good intentions, but I question their commitment."

Devam disagrees saying that "it is the people working for the government who toil with the problem at their level daily and getting out and being exposed to the problem on a street level is invaluable." But she does understand the value of the experience of people who have struggled with the very issue being examined.

"I don't understand how you can turn homelessness into a political issue," Trudel adds. This is life and death for people. It has nothing to do with politics. I know one guy who doesn't have an alcohol problem who would pour beer on himself every night just so he could get into the (George) Spady Centre because all the other shelters were full. It's pure survival."

Yet as sides may debate the effectiveness of the count, the reality remains that still more than one

thousand Edmontonians fend off the cold to live through our deathly winter nights.

A break down of the count reveals that 611 people were absolute homeless, meaning they have no shelter alternatives. 503 were sheltered homeless meaning they were in emergency accommodations expecting to be on the street by the end of their stay. This year there were 111 homeless children. There were 64 homeless families, 63% of those families being absolute homeless. The majority of the homeless are single with a number of 923. Among these 53% were absolute homeless.

The Dough

"It was very important that we put the money (\$1.3 million) back into housing," says Councillor Taylor. "In Calgary they levered \$975,000 into 4.4 million. And it was a big help to their situation. We lost a year of having the money available... but now it's an ongoing thing, committed every year."

Shortly after Taylor and his colleagues announced their funding, news came from Claudette Bradshaw's office, Federal Minister of Labour and assigned to Homelessness, that the Liberal government was committing \$753 million to help fight homelessness across Canada. To simplify such an inaccessible number, let's say there are 2 million people living in absolute poverty in Canada. That means each poor person would get \$376.50. However things are not that simple.

The first \$300 million is aimed at the Supportive Community Partnership Initiative, which means community groups work to identify gaps in services. They can then appeal to a committee represented by all three levels of government for this funding to fill the determined gaps. There are no specific parameters.

"It's left up to the communities to decide what they need and then the money is there for them," said a spokesperson from the Ministers office in Ottawa.

\$170 million will go to existing programs such as aboriginal and youth employment strategies, along with the shelter enhancement program for women in crisis.

\$10 million is intended to free up federal properties that can be turned into housing and shelter and the rest will go into shelter programs such as transforming

commercial properties into residential properties.

"It really will expand the housing parameters. This is a lot more of a coordinated approach. It's really a good start. It won't all be nailed down until the negotiations with provinces are completed, this of course under the current social union agreement."

"We're delighted to hear this," says Devam. "It's good people are finally realizing it's needed, we're not yet sure how it will turn out and whether or not there is money to produce new housing, but it's a good sign from the federal government. What the city has done is an exceptional thing. Now we are just waiting for the province. So far they are ignoring the problem."

On the street

What does \$753 million dollars mean to the people who are homeless.

"That's a lot of f**kin' money, but I doubt the people around here will see any of it, that's usually how it goes. Big money and it gets lost on the way to where it's supposed to go," says Dale as he sips coffee in an inner city drop-in centre. Dale is spending the week before Christmas with friends, but after the 25th he's out on the streets again.

Not everyone was as skeptical as Dale.

"It's good," says Kathy. "It'll put people in houses and in warm homes I hope, so people don't have to sleep in abandoned houses and people won't end up in the hospital."

Betty, a formerly homeless woman, believes the money needs to go directly to housing and to helping people stabilize their lives.

"When I came off the street I didn't even know how to do my laundry and basically didn't know how to care for a house. It takes time. If people are addicts they won't care too much about where they live. They want to feed their addiction. Not everyone who is homeless is an addict, but these problems need to be addressed at the same time as their lack of housing does."

Michael Walters

Justice can be manipulated by the rich and the poor

R.H. MacLACHLAN

Being involved in a protracted (three years and counting) lawsuit (divorce/child custody/property settlement) I'm beginning to understand from first-hand experience that the legal process has more to do with resolving problems to the mutual satisfaction of those concerned than it does with the objective search for absolute truth.

This may seem obvious when one looks at the civil side of the law. The accusing party (plaintiff) demands something (usually money) from the accused party (defendant). The plaintiff's lawyer advises the plaintiff how much he will charge him to take the matter to trial, and the chances of winning.

The defendant's lawyer will advise the defendant how much it will cost to defend the matter in court, and the chances of losing. Both lawyers will suggest compromises to their clients and the haggling will begin. Most of the time a compromise will be reached that both sides can live with---for every civil action that actually goes to trial dozens, perhaps scores, are settled around a conference table. Usually, the party who can pay the pricier lawyer gets the greatest satisfaction.

This is all very well and good when the issue is money, or a matter of personal or moral principle is involved. What should be the practice when human freedom is involved?

Sadly, it happens all too often in the criminal jus-

tice system as well, where the ability to pay for legal counsel often determines how satisfactory the outcome is to the accused.

Take the case of Dorothy Joudrie. Her problem was simple, and not uncommon---she believed (rightly or wrongly) that her husband was being abusive to her. So she bought a handgun. On returning home, she waited in ambush for her husband and shot him point-blank several times. Fortunately, he survived. Charged with attempted murder, Joudrie used her considerable wealth to employ psychiatrists and psychologists to testify in court that she was in an altered state of consciousness when she did all this.

The jury bought it, found her not criminally responsible for her actions and she spent three months in Alberta Hospital before being pronounced "cured" to resume her life where it had left off, without her husband, of course, who by that time had left her. Result: her problem was solved. This is one example of how the wealthy can obtain the kind of compromise they want from what is supposed to be an impartial system.

But while the old saying is "you'll never toss a millionaire in prison" (unless you count those country clubs known as 'minimum security institutions'), it is also possible for the poor to manipulate the courts to their own ends. The secret is knowing how to play the legal-aid system.

In Alberta, Legal Aid pays lawyers for courtroom appearances only, not for preparation or research time, expert witnesses, or investigators' fees, except by special application. A lawyer might know that even if his client is innocent the chances of proving it on the courtroom floor are slim. For that reason, lawyers may

suggest to clients that probation or a lighter sentence can be obtained in exchange for a guilty plea.

From the point of view of a lower-income person who wants to avoid jail (or spend as little time there as possible), this is obviously a good compromise---a solution to the all-or-nothing problem of having his guilt determined at trial. But it is also a solution to another type of problem for some impoverished people.

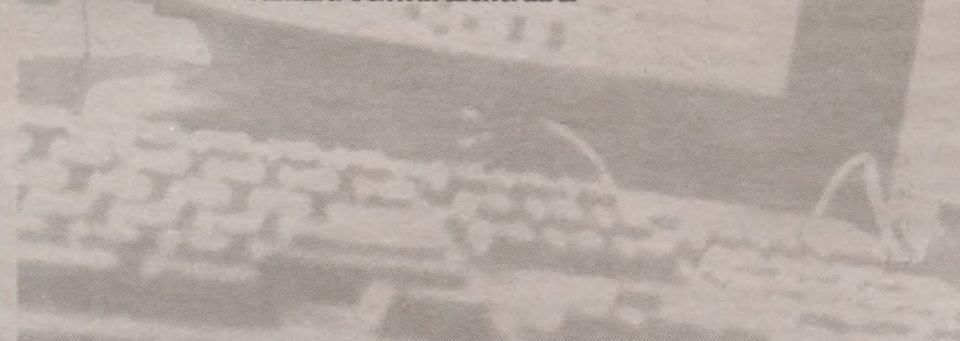
As long as there are tatters in the social safety net, there will be people for whom life in prison is preferable to life outside of it. In jail one receives three square meals a day, a warm place to sleep, a shower every couple of days and needed medication. That's a lot more than the vast number of Canada's homeless get. How many of the individuals from poverty backgrounds in this country's prisons are there because they want to be---because committing a crime and going to jail for it was the only way they knew of obtaining the necessities of life? Has any research on this been done? I'd like to suggest it happens more often than you think--- consciously or unconsciously.

So when you hear that the justice system is loaded in favour of the 20% of the population which form society's upper socio-economic strata, don't forget that the bottom 20% benefit in their own way as well. It's the 60% that form the middle-income group---those who can neither afford high-priced legal help while at the same time not qualifying for legal aid --are often the ones who get shafted.

Mr. MacLachlan is a retired weekly newspaper reporter.

Inf-Planet

Tamara Schwartzentruber



Well, the new millennium has arrived, so it seems only right to join in the general fashion of prediction - especially after last month's gloomy review of the past century. The trouble is that most predictions, usually look not only wrong but often foolish later. This fact, however, hasn't put a damper on the prophetic fervor of nearly everyone from Nostradamus interpreters to Time magazine.

A few random web searches for next-century predictions turned up some interesting things. Looking for "millennium predictions" tossed up hundreds of astrology pages and mystical prophecies - from love-life horoscopes for the next 1000 years to attempts at scouring the book of Revelations for signs that the Rapture will begin in 2000. Searching for "21st century predictions," in contrast, returned a range of financial and technological predictions. The authors of these pages, by and large, celebrated the rapid technological changes they foresee, in much the same way that 20th-century prognosticators were certain that the assembly-line and factory would end unemployment and hunger. Predictions for the new, world-saving technologies include intelligent software agents

that will do all of our tedious research for us, smart drugs that will genetically enhance us, making us all smarter, faster, stronger, and better-looking, virtual worlds that will replace the tedium of real life for millions, and the elimination of the physical workplace in favour of telecommunicating.

They also have some frightening predictions, however. One website

(<http://21net.com/online/timec1.htm>) predicts that corporations will begin to form autonomous nations within only a few years. Given that over half of the world's largest economies are currently private transnational corporations, this seems uncomfortably plausible - and one suspects that internal democracy won't be high on their list of efficiency indicators!

Some envision the rampant growth of epidemics, as the conditions that encourage disease (overpopulation, centralization of the food supply, etc.) continue to increase. On the upside, our increasing ability to identify and vaccinate diseases may enable us to predict them like the weather, strengthening our ability to protect ourselves.

Others predict that we'll finally cure some of those diseases that rank among the greatest causes of death (notably in North America and Europe rather than Africa or Asia - I didn't come across any predictions of a cure for malaria!), including cancer, diabetes, atherosclerosis, and Alzheimer's. It does strike me that some of the very diseases that we expect technology to cure may well be caused by technology - after all, if a lack of elevators and automobiles forced us all to be

more active, and the non-existence of mass-scale food processing forced us to eat more whole foods, there'd be a good deal less heart diseases; type 2 diabetes, similarly, is often related to overweight and inactivity. There's also mounting evidence, as we reach the end of a century of unprecedented technological change, that many cancers are related to environmental factors whose cause is that same technological change.

What's most striking, however, about these endless predictions, is that most of them seem to be reserved for the financial and technological elite: for all the talk of restructuring employment, there's not much mention of unemployment, which so far has only been increased by our rage for technological innovation. For all the celebration of new technologies, there's still not much consideration for the impact existing technologies have had on our planet's ability to survive.

I'm not proposing that we abandon technological change. But I'm wondering how much longer the world's poor and the world's environment can withstand our passion for growth. If the predictions are to be believed, we'll have to hang on for at least another hundred years. ♦

**Our
Voice**

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All good, no bad and the renegades

Michael Walters

So we get a call from one of our loyal customers. "Someone is selling Our Voice and I think they're drunk," the lady tells us. She's phoning to help us out, to help us protect our image and the image of all the other vendors.

Over the years of providing the service and the products of Our Voice we have dealt closely with the issues of addictions. Many people who have walked through our doors over the past five and half years have struggled with one addiction or another and in some cases Our Voice has helped them overcome their addiction and make positive changes in their life. In some other cases Our Voice has had no positive impact on a person.

We've always tried our best to recognize which affect we're having. Are we contributing to an addiction or are we giving someone the support they need in order to overcome what keeps their lives mired in poverty and difficulty? It's often a very delicate question.

The majority of people come to Our Voice firstly because they need money. We have always offered a non judgemental and open first step to anyone willing to take it. This allows us to get to know the person for who they want to be, not who we think they should be. It's very important in building the types of relationships we hope to build.

Once people get settled with Our Voice and meet their immediate economic needs, a few things may happen. They will either move on to something else,

or they take us deeper into their lives and reveal situations they are having difficulty with, or they simply settle into the community that exists among other vendors with Our Voice having stabilized their lives.

There are approximately 75-125 people who we know to sell at any given time during the year. About 30 people do it regularly, daily almost. They make their living selling Our Voice, because there is little other opportunity and it works for them. A small number of these people have addictions and have sold Our Voice for years.

Our Voice is a project that promotes health, self improvement and self acceptance. We are willing to work together with any person committed to helping themselves. We give everyone a chance. Addiction or no addiction. However we do have three simple rules that all vendors must comply with, one of them saying vendors must be alcohol and drug free while they sell Our Voice. Selling under the influence means suspension.

But there is debate. The argument has been made that telling a chronic addict not to sell when he is drunk is like telling a schizophrenic to not be delusional while he sells. Alcoholism, for example, much like schizophrenia, is an illness and needs to be treated like an illness, not a crime. We are committed to do that and committed to educate our readers about addictions.

We have made the decision, however, not to sell copies of Our Voice to certain people because we know they will use the money they make to feed their addiction.

Here is another question. Do we have the right to

The masses have become more 'humane', educated and informed and the voting, middle class public is a bit squeamish about physical force but in justice it veiled by phony media accounts and supported by the force of the law they feel adequately comfortable. But the brutality goes on because it is now veiled in a cloak of 'rightness' called progress and development. The courts and the law are now supporting it.

The M.A.I., like the F.T.A., the original free trade agreement and the N.A.F.T.A., intended to limit the capacity of elected governments to place restrictions on private investors. It intended to free corporations from obstructions to an unimpeded flow of capital. Government's hands are to be tied, now and in the future.

In 1840, during the Irish Potato famine, the force of law was used to brutalize the poor. The 'poor law' as it was known, made it legal for landlords to confiscate property of bankrupt tenants and force them from their homes to certain death.

Today, in our own country, there are by-laws that create 'Unpeople', a caste of poor, who, legislated into criminality, are forced into even more desperation than before.

For example, Bill 18, in Ontario, now criminalizes squeegee kids, panhandlers, homeless for simply being on the street in the areas of other citizens judged to be more worthy. This is happening at a time when the governments are spending even less than before on social programs. Again, the force of law has been used by the powerful, to placate their selfish wishes.

The masses have become more humane over the centuries perhaps, but the brutality of the poor continues. It is not the club, the canon, or gun but it is done by the force of the law.

The force of the law has combined with a mass media that is as corrupted, influenced, and paid for by the rich. George Orwell described how censorship in 'free' societies was far more sophisticated and thorough

Editorial OPINION

Our Voice the spare change magazine

tell people how to spend the money they earn? No one has the right to tell me how to spend the money I earn. Well at the same time, we have had to make some choices and we have decided we can't contribute to people who are slowly killing themselves with alcohol and drugs. But we will let people who have addictions sell Our Voice, only if they have committed themselves to treatment and live up to desires to overcome what is potentially killing them. As for the people who haven't taken these steps, they are still welcome to come and be part of Our Voice's community, but they will not receive copies of the magazine. We can't be apart of something so negative as we try to be a positive alternative in people's lives.

The vast majority of our vendors are people who are working hard to be independent, happy and healthy and this is what we need to have happen.

But as usual, people are desperate and even if we have banned them from selling Our Voice, there are the renegades who manage to dig up copies and be part of the black market that has always slipped past us.

We ask that people only buy Our Voice from vendors who are wearing badges and if you do see someone selling Our Voice under the influence do let us know, so we can help that person and protect the image of all those other vendors who toil in the cold winter chill to put food on their tables. ♦

Force of law; The new weapon of the powerful

Rodney Graham

Since the dawn of time the powerful and the wealthy have repressed, exploited, and abused those less fortunate living on our earth. The weapons used toward this in past centuries have changed little. The rule of force, the rule of might makes right and that was all that was needed. Perhaps religious dogma may have been used in the past in order to justify the brutality of the powerful against the poor. But now, as the masses are educated, and informed, a more sophisticated form of subjugation is essential in order for the powerful to get away with oppression, repression, and exploitation. The force of the law and the collusion of governments acting on behalf of the rich is now that weapon.

This is obvious with the W.T.O. (World Trade Organization), the M.A.I. (Multi Lateral Agreement on Investment) and N.A.F.T.A. (North American Free Trade Agreement). Because of public outcry by activists, church leaders, and others with a conscience towards injustice, these groups of multinationals have found it necessary to cover their brutality with a veil of so called decency known as the law.

The force of the sword

In 1839 the British forced a war upon unprepared China because the Chinese refused to trade with them in Opium. This practice eventually led to a nation of drug addicts dependant on the trade. The British ran gunboats up and down Chinese rivers looting and killing. After the 'war' the British billed the Chinese for the expenses entailed by the British military. It amounted to billions in today's currency. This is an example of simple 'gunboat diplomacy'.

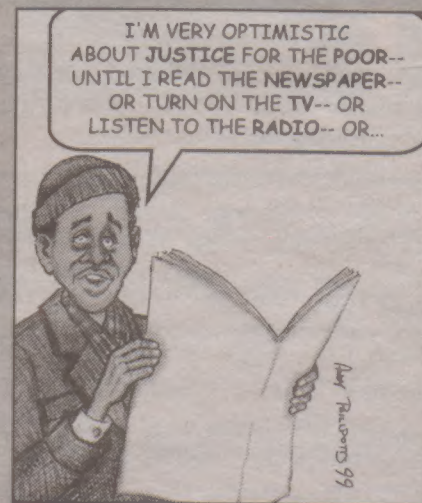
The new weapon

than in dictatorships because 'unpopular' ideas can be silenced and inconvenient facts kept in the dark without any need for an official ban.

This tendency towards using the law to justify their misdeeds is increasing as activists and human rights advocates complain louder and louder. These groups must compete against the power and money of the rich who wish to subjugate and repress the rights of the poor, not just in the third world, but here too. And those in the legal community can tell you, 'those with the money behind them win in court'. In the legal world justice has nothing to do with the truth. Whoever has the biggest bank account wins.

Our governments are cutting social spending, but social issues remain. This, along with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, means many social issues are now before the courts. Yet judges are used to legal, not social matters. What are they to do?

Because of the desire of the business community to have a sterile environment and because a few snobs do not want to see someone they consider 'beneath' them when they venture into the public, the force of the law has been used as a weapon for the rich and a slap in the face to the poor. Shame! ♦



What is in the stars for 2000?

Charlie Meadows Predicts the future.

Yeah yeah. So you think I'm just another chump making some stupid predictions about the next century. Woo hoo hey. Well I hope this rant turns out to be a little more than saying things like I think Richard Simmons is gonna marry Ele MacPherson, setting off a barrage of the complete idiots from the 1900's marrying some of the hottest chicks of the 1900's. That is if Ele MacPherson is even real. Weren't the 1900's all about being unreal? At least that's how it all turned out. Photo enhancement was invented to make people more beautiful and raise everyone's expectations. Unfortunately I really think that Richard Simmons was real and no one's expectations were raised. Yikes.

I will begin with the world and end with myself.

I predict that people will continue to get poorer and poorer and hungrier and hungrier in those far away countries that most of us only see on TV. You know the people I'm talking about. The ones who live in sand and when we see them on TV, they are naked, eating mushy mush from the top of a coconut and some white blonde girl with her heart on her sleeve, wearing expensive Cargo pants, hovers in the background playing with malnourished naked children. The solution, as I see it, lays in the size of our televisions. We can now get these 50 inch screens and if we were to witness the trials and tribulations of the far away poor on a 50 inch screen it would seem a lot more profound than if we watched it on 19 inch screen. This way more people will begin thinking globally and look outside of their own eyelids to the world that isn't so great for many people. My prediction here is that companies like Panasonic and RCA will really have a positive impact on ending third world poverty. I demand bigger TV's at lower prices. TV's for everyone.

The biggest move, I predict, on a global scale is that Queen Elizabeth will get hitched up with Boris Yeltsen. He really needs her wealth to survive. The guy is practically dead right now. Every time we see him on TV he has a wet cloth pressed up against his forehead or else he's fallen over and needed to be rushed to the hospital. The result of this relationship will be that he becomes King of England and can pursue his interest in nuclear weapons and Cricket 2000 on PlayStation. Of course this is my boldest prediction. Some say that the Queen isn't really a woman and

Boris in all likelihood will drop dead before the snow melts this year. Either way it will have no impact on anyone, because, neither of them really do anything other than show up on tv every now and then.

Back here in Canada, the Reform Party in the bold-est move in Canadian political history will trade their leader Preston Manning and the oafy Deborah Grey to the Bloc Quebecois for their provincial leader Lucienne Bouchard and an option on Gilles Doucette. It really won't be a big idealistic shift for anyone involved. Manning will learn enough French to become a popular Federal Bloc leader and to tell you the truth he will be able to speak better French than Prime minister Chretien in only four months. Deborah Grey will take over as Premier of Quebec, shortly after wedding the old drunk tiger Jacques Parizeau.

I'm sorry to predict that the Great Lakes will be purchased by Bill Gates and



Boris Yeltsen will marry Queen E in the most celebrated wedding of 2000.

will no longer be open to public use. They will then be known as the Gates Lakes. However Bill Gates will be murdered by an angry ex-convict from California

who was forced to package his crappy software for slave wages while he served time in San Quentin. Bill Gates's money, the 100 billion dollars he has left over after his 100 billion dollar purchase of the great lakes, will go to buy gold rings for homeless single mothers. In his will he said he felt sorry for homeless single mothers and said he wanted to see them have something nice. The matter of who owns the Great lakes will then be tied up in the courts for many years, as the governments of the surrounding regions fight with Bill Gates's illegitimate son Ricky Martin over who should take full ownership of the property. The good thing is that with no human contact the lakes will be able to regain their once pristine and beautiful conditions. I thank you Bill Gates, mostly for email. Rest in peace.

(by the way, Bill conceived Ricky Martin when he

was in South America, livin' la vida loca, scouting out some slave labour. He had a few too many cocktails, and well as the story goes....)

Back here in Alberta, I predict big things. Brace yourselves. Premier Ralph Klein will, in an unusual change of heart, become an advocate for the poor. He will lower taxes to low and middle income earners and raise taxes to wealthy Albertans and in an all out battle with the Liberals in the legislature he will bully through legislation forcing wealthy corporations to pay their fair share of taxes. NO MORE FREE RIDES will be his campaign slogan. CEO's heads will be spinning. Fortunately the amazingly strong Alberta economy will be able to cushion the impact of this "socialist dribble" as the new ARP (Alberta Reform Party) leader Stockwell Day puts it. An economy he credits himself for building. Klein will be heard to retort: "After 7 years of rhetoric we now know that a strong economy will not help people who don't have the tools to take advantage of it. So on that note I will increase social spending dramatically to ensure that all citizens are given the opportunities, emotionally, mentally, physically and socially to make the most of their lives and those who are disabled or disadvantaged in any way will be valued and cared for by my government."

Yes that will be a big change indeed.

As for Private Healthcare, I predict Health and Wellness Minister Halvar Jonson to slip in Ralph Klein's hot tub and he will need to go a hospital. When he checks out and sees his bill... "Holy Crap. Who can afford this," he'll say. This is expensive even for an MLA. Don't sweat it Alberta. There will be no Private Healthcare. Not in the new Ralph Klein government.

Closer to home, here at Bissell Centre, we welcome new Executive Director Shelly Williams, to replace the great Larry Derkach. Shelly is here for one year as the interim director. During this year, it is the task of the Board of Directors of Bissell Centre to find the permanent Executive Director and here is my prediction.

Peter Pocklington. Yes indeed, good ol' Peter Puck himself, with a debt load the size of Kansas, old Pete the Cheat will come in and make an honest livin' on the backs of the poor.

As for the Stanley Cup, I'll take the Toronto Maple Leafs. This year's Oscar goes to American Beauty for making fun of Suburbia and the Grammys will be won by a bunch of crappy singers singing a bunch of crappy songs.

As for ol' Charlie Meadows, I'll keep making my rounds and bitchin' about this world and what a world it is!!!!!! ♦

Happy New year.

Art from the Unknown becoming known for excellence

Our Voice staff

The crowd sidled shoulder to shoulder. Their eyes were peering at colours, shapes, spirits and emotions lifted off of canvas and sculpted from experiences and feelings that make life so spectacularly human.

The Art from the Unknown ventured into its third year of displaying the works and talents of people living in poverty in Edmonton.

The opening night of the Display in mid December saw more than 800 people walk through the doors to view the work of 80 local artists. It was work in the areas of painting, drawing, sculpture, wood carving, stained glass and more.

Why would so many people be interested in the art work of the poor?

Aden Henry, who lives in old Strathcona and teaches Junior high school in the neighbourhood said that, "I want to see real life portrayed. There's a real need for

this and a real reason for it. It educates people that the world isn't so perfect and it isn't political lip service, it's art and it's beautiful. In turn I don't want to see the work of some affluent Charlie who sits around painting fruit. I want to see the work of someone who can't afford fruit. Life is not always so easy and the best work comes from the deepest holes in our lives. This is an incredible experience and I know this helps people lift themselves."

Flo Pastoor, who has organized the Art show from New Democrat MLA Dr. Raj Pannu's constituency office each of the past three years was thrilled with this year's show.

"It was an amazing success. More artists sold more work than ever before. There was a great comradery between the artists, it was very supportive... lot's of artists were commissioned. It was great."

One of the artists was Darren Wolachuck, who, in his second year, sold seven pieces over the four days.

"I was pleased to be part of a show that represented poverty as an important issue. As an artist I wanted to be part of a community and I did that. I had the opportunity to learn a lot about the WTO and what went on in Seattle as well as I might start volunteering for FoodNotBombs.

"It really inspired me to paint and it made me realize that I'm not alone," he said.

For Vanna sh Amon, it opened the doors to possibility.

"I got a lot of positive feedback from people and an owner of a gallery said I could possibly display my sculptures in his gallery," she said.

"I'm sure it is important for the artists to have this type of venue, especially people in poverty and it translates into some very important lessons through some very powerful and poignant art for the rest of us," said Henry. "I'll come back every year."

Our Voice is a proud sponsor of Art from the Unknown and some of the work from this year's show can be seen on the back page of this month's issue. ♦

The Theory of Acceptance and Accessibility

The day I went to the chair

Heather Slade

As a normally able-bodied person, I had the opportunity to experience disability for a day. At 30, I have the beginnings of arthritis in my joints. The pain is normally manageable and does not interfere with my daily life. Unfortunately, some days it does. It happened the day of the Scarecrow Festival at the Agricom. It was the last day and I had hoped the crowds would have thinned. I wasn't that lucky. With all the publicity, it had definitely caught my kid's attention and I had promised to take them.

I woke up on Sunday morning feeling like I had slept on a cold concrete slab. The worst pain was in my right hip. I managed to hobble through lunch, grimacing the entire time. I felt nauseous and weak. How could I possibly walk around like this? At this point I gritted my teeth and determined not to disappoint them. Limping along with the support of both kids, we made it from bus to bus and then to the train. I felt ridiculously clumsy. It didn't help that the new high-powered bus's sudden stops and starts were just like their spastic forefathers, trolley buses. Each jerk nearly brought tears to my eyes. If you've never had arthritis, try to imagine steel wool scraping your joint sockets. It was in this condition that we arrived at the Coliseum LRT station.

It was all I could do to keep my lunch down and myself up. Then I saw the first aid office and a plan emerged. They might, just might, have a wheelchair which I could borrow. As it turned out, they did. Gratefully I collapsed into it (only to groan when my

hip made contact with the side).

I was thrust into a different world. I was a few feet shorter, awkward in movement and in the way of others, more often than not. It struck me that this was also a vantage point of many children. It was they, whom I was eye to eye with. My world had become one of feet, legs and torsos. They all began to look the same to me. If I wanted to hear or be heard, I had to look up, "look all the way up" (and not all the giants were friendly). I was no expert at maneuvering the rolling chair. Purses, elbows and other people's functional hips banged into me with regularity. My daughter tried her hand at pushing me for awhile, but the games eventually lured her away. My son walked beside me, hand on mine like a sentry guard, but he too needed to play. So, for about a half an hour, I was left to my own devices. I had two goals in that time: pee and smoke.

I was glad to see that the restrooms were close by. Using my arms and hands to turn the wheels, I made it down the narrow corridor leading to the toilets. I was all the way in the bathroom when an attendant came over and said, "You should use the bathroom out in the lobby, this one is too crowded." No problem, except now I have to turn around, squeeze past the growing line-up and find the other ladies room. The kids, meanwhile, are still having fun with bean bag tosses, guessing games and haunted house tours. After a bit of searching, I find the uncrowded cans. Now, I am not paralyzed, as in dead nerves, however, let's just say that I was hampered by nerves strung out from pain. After performing my little deed I settled back into the chair and rolled over the sink.

The tap was one that required firm pressure from above (from above!) and with me practically under the counter. Soap was located well above the sink. I wasn't fond of the idea of it squirting in my eye as I blindly dispensed it above my head. Towels, well, although I

really could have used them, being below the sink (it seems that all water runs downhill or arms, or what have you), I was about to give up. "Here would you like some", she said as she handed them to me. I looked at her. It was a conscious effort to lift my head. There in her eyes I saw a combination of kindness, pity, and guilt. "Thank-you" was all I could say.

The afternoon wore on and I began to notice that there were three distinct responses to me in the chair. There were the ones who appeared annoyed, perhaps by the sheer bulk of my entourage. These were the ones most likely to bump into me. They'd walk directly in front of me, step over me and generally be careless with bags, cameras, and swinging small kids legs near my head. Then there was the ones who ignored me. I don't just mean in the way that one pays no attention to strangers, but in that concerted effort kind of ignore. You just know that they were told not to stare at "people like that". They would avert their eyes, but all the while watch me with their peripheral vision. I assume, that just like I've done, they wanted to see what was wrong with me without being rude.

Finally, there were the ones that were downright charitable. They held doors, gave us their unused tickets, and smiled down at me in Florence Nightingale fashion. They glowed with "Scout" honour and at least twice, I was used as an object lesson to children on how to be a "helper". It was kind of cute, and I was reminded of how many times I've done that with my own kids.

When it was time to go, we returned the chair. I was oddly grateful for the education it had provided me with. I had been able to see the world from a perspective that I have not had for many years, that of a child's. In spite of experiencing the darker aspects of peoples' characters, I had also been imparted with kindness and generosity. I hope to remember the lessons I learned while in the wheelchair. ♦

Southside Chiropractors example of boundless generosity

When Dr. Don and Dr. Christie MacDonald, a brother and sister Chiropractic team, opened up their new practice in Edmonton's southside, they were concerned about more than people's twisted spines.

"It's important to care about the communities around you and to promote healthy lifestyles. We understand that so many people are struggling and this is something that we can do to help out," says Don.

On December 15, their clinic offered a day of free Chiropractic care for anyone who brought food to be donated to the Bissell Centre.

With more than 15,000 Edmonton families fending through the holidays with next to nothing to eat, the many acts of kindness such as the MacDonalds has taken a bit of the strain off of these poor families.

"This is not all we'd like to do. We've done stuff like this before with other agencies, but we'd like to get right into the community and assist people with their health issues," says Don.

Our Voice and the Bissell Centre would like to thank all of those generous souls who gave so much over the Christmas season. It really made a difference. ♦

Our Voice staff



Whitemud Crossing

Chiropractors

DR. DON MACDONALD DR. CHRISTIE MACDONALD
DOCTORS of Chiropractic

#174 4211-1044
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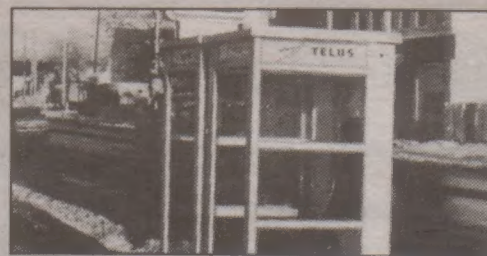
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Notice of Correction

The story in the December 1999 Our Voice Volume 6 Number 12 titled "The Year 12 days of Christmas" was credited to Ron Murdock. We erred in that Ron found the piece, he did not write the piece.

In last month's "Next Month in Our Voice" section we eluded to a story on "People still earning less than \$4/hour in Alberta. This piece is being verified and if accurate will be printed in an upcoming issue.

NEXT MONTH in Our Voice



● Just how desperate is Telus Corporation?

● Families, Love, Valentines Day

● Interview with new Bissell Centre Executive Director Shelley Williams

● Poetry of the heart

● and the Bill Gates contest

Wanted to be King of the Hi-way

For a 17 year period I was in the running for the title of "King of the Road." I logged about 125,000 kilometers. My story recalls some of the highs and lows of my days on the road.

Long distance hitch-hiking is crazy, unreliable and is totally unpredictable. But then the adventure of finding out what is around the next corner is intoxicating. Hitch-hiking is being drenched by 4 hours of continuous pelting rain at the Port Edward turn-off or putting food resources together with the driver and cooking on a Coleman stove at the end of a camper near Fort Nelson. It can be the Life of Riley and if you want a free ride plus a bargain basement tour it's just that.

Not many of the real hoboes are around anymore. Characters like Hobo Gordie, Ross "The Baptist" Draper, Cecil the Big Iron, Al the Taxpayer, Yellowknife Robbie are just some of the colourful characters making the rounds. Things can get dangerous out there. How many hitch-hikers have gone missing and haven't been found? Age is another factor. A lot of us are between 35 and 65. Life on the road takes a lot out of a man. Retirement is looking good and all this kind of travel comes with a price. For all the exciting moments, there were some long nights trying to grab some sleep on the side of the road or waiting at an all night truck stop for the sun to come up. I don't recommend it but I won't apologize for doing it.

I only had two rules while thumbing. The driver had to be sober and straight. I wouldn't put my life in the hands of a drunk or a druggie. Secondly I kept as clean and tidy as possible. No driver wants a passenger who looks like they haven't showered in 6 months.

I got rides in trucks, school buses, converted campers and old milk trucks. Once I got a ride in a stretch limo. Unfortunately there wasn't a rich woman involved. The driver was traveling from Edmonton to Whitehorse and needed someone to help him keep awake. I have been picked up by off duty police officers and former hitch-hikers returning the favour.

Thumbing was interesting and the lure of the road was strong, but the urge to "retire" from the road is winning out. I want to cast some roots down and continue on with my writing career.

Longest ride: Whitehorse, Yukon to Fort St. John, B.C. 845 miles.

Shortest ride: 3 miles. A guy picked me up at Rosetown, Saskatchewan. He said he was going to Swift Current. But at the Outlook turnoff, he decided it was time to head east. I was not amused.

Longest wait: 42 hours at Clearwater, B.C. It was the second and last time I thumbed with another guy. Funny thing was that when we split up I had a ride within 15 minutes. We drove by him and I never saw my partner again. I wonder if he's still waiting.

Shortest wait: A 3 way tie. North Battleford, Saskatchewan, 10 miles south of Grande Prairie,



Alberta and the Grand Cache turnoff 7 miles west of Hinton, Alberta. Each time the first car stopped to pick me up.

Best place to hitch-hike: British Columbia or the Yukon. Most places are easy to get a ride but even if it isn't a short wait, I enjoy the view around me.

Worst place to hitch-hike: South east Saskatchewan. Long waits and short rides.

Runner-up: Highway 4 in Saskatchewan between Rosetown and Swift Current. The question to ask is whether the weather or the flies get you first.

Most dangerous situation: Just north of Hope, B.C., I got picked up by a party animal. He was on his

way to Prince Rupert and was in such a hurry that he was passing long haul trucks in the Fraser Canyon tunnels. Literally fearing for my life, I asked to be let out. Party Animal said he had no time to stop but I said he did as my hand advanced towards his jugular vein. He let me out within seconds. I got picked up by a trucker not long afterwards. We passed by Party Animal a couple of miles later. He had been pulled over the RCMP.

Most unusual situation: I got picked up by 2 guys I met days earlier at the Men's Hostel in Dawson Creek, B.C. I asked how gas money was being raised. The guys had been picking up pop/beer containers they found at the side of the road then cashing them in at the next town. We made it from Kamloops to Calgary on \$30 worth of containers.

Five best places to hitch-hike in Canada:

- 1) Yellowhead Highway from Hinton to Saskatoon and from Terrace to Prince George.
- 2) Trans-Canada Highway heading west from Calgary.
- 3) Highway 97 from Kelowna to Prince George.
- 4) Highway 3 during the day from Rock Creek, B.C. to Medicine Hat, Alberta.
- 5) The Alaska Highway in the early morning.

Five worst places to hitch-hike in Canada:

- 1) Wawa and White River in Ontario. Worst reputation in Canada by far. Waits for a ride out have apparently gone on for days. I heard that guys have turned down rides that go within a 200 mile radius of these towns. One story had a guy who was here so long and was in the restaurant so often that a waitress took him home. The guy wound up getting a job in Wawa and started a family with the waitress. Legend states that a priest got killed by a hitch-hiker a few years back, thus starting the infamy.

- 2) South eastern Saskatchewan.
- 3) Highway 4 in Saskatchewan between Rosetown and Swift Current.
- 4) Jasper/Banff
- 5) Chilliwack on ramp. For whatever reasons it takes me 3 hours to get a ride here.

I compiled this list after 17 years of thumbing from Whitehorse to Vancouver Island to Winnipeg ♦

Ron Murdock

Humanitarian Society's new movement of social justice

Commentary by Dale Ferris

It appears that a new movement is happening in our country. What that movement is learning to deal with is its own poverty issues. It is a movement that is creating community social workers and other agencies to deal with social issues. Groups like the Philia Advocacy Group, Poverty in Action, Bissell Centre and others. There is now also the Humanitarian Society which is attempting to create community based thrift stores, food bank services and other programs.

The absurdity of poverty

At a conference held at City Hall, a lady stood up and started talking about her children and it hit me

hard when she talked about her pre-schoolers coming home from school where there is not enough to eat or they can't have the latest fashions that other kids have. It doesn't matter if she is single or married, living on Social Services or on a pension, she is living below the poverty line and she is not alone. She is one of many thousands of parents in the Edmonton area who are faced with the task of explaining to their children that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing are beyond their budget. How can we look after our children when we can't look after ourselves. You might think she has an alcohol or drug problem which is often the case when people think about the poor. But she is a very hard worker. According to variable information, some people are spending 80% of their income on shelter. Single men on income assistance will spend 100% of their income on shelter.

Poverty is a man made situation and has drastic consequences. As of January 2000 over one and a half million children in Canada will live below the poverty

line or at it.

I am fed up that money and politics come before peoples needs especially when I was under the impression that elected officials were to stand up for people's rights, not step on their rights, especially the six constitutional rights such as food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education and dignity.

The evil marriage

People seem to neglect and never talk about the marriage between poverty and crime. You can't have one without the other. So if crime hasn't come to your neighbourhood it soon will. When a person is convicted of one crime there are the other 10 or 15 that she or he may have gotten away with. As of now the Canadian government is spending 87 billion dollars a year to run the justice system. That is four trips to Mars and back with extended vacation time.

(continued on page 11)

Justice redefined in native community

Jason Harley

The Provincial Government and the Tsuu T'ina First Nation are preparing to embark on a bold experiment. The new century will see the creation of a unique community-based Aboriginal Justice system on the Tsuu T'ina Reserve. Judge Mandamin will preside as the Provincial Court Judge and an office of the Peacemaker will be intergrated into the process. The Peacemaker is what makes the collaboration unique.

Once a crime has been committed, instead of the courts, the Peacemaker will become the initial point of contact for members of the Tsuu T'ina Nation. He or she will act as a type of mediator.

Mr. Ellery Starlight described the peacemaking process.

"The assailant and the victim are brought in and a Peacemaker and a Tribal Elder are assigned to the case.

The complainant and the defendant are asked to describe what happened, why it happened and what they think would be a reasonable resolution. The Peacemaker and Elder then share their views on the case and make a recommendation designed to bring about peace and closure. The goal is to maintain harmony within the community and avoid having cases go before the courts. Aboriginal people are already significantly over-represented in provincial and federal correctional institutions."

Even though only 5% of the Alberta population is Aboriginal, Aboriginal people account for 39% of this province's sentenced admissions to custody. Most are for relatively minor, non-violent, crimes and/or parole violations. The hope, according to Mr. Starlight, "is to eliminate many of these types of incarcerations by imposing community based solutions which in the end, will be more beneficial to the victim and the defendant than jail time. The objective is to heal, not punish."

The Peacemaker will, however, only compliment the current justice system. Both parties must agree to participate in the process and the Peacemaker's resolutions are not binding. At any time a case can be

remanded to Provincial Court and Judge Mandamin.

Peacemakers will be chosen by the members of the Tsuu T'ina Nation and trained by the province. An exact electoral process is yet to be determined. Training will consist of classes in law, religion, native traditions and mediation. All Peacemakers will be certified.

While many aspects of the Peacemaking process are still undefined, it does appear to be a step in the right direction. The Tsuu T'ina Nation and the Alberta Government are breaking new ground.

Many people believe our European modelled justice system simply does not work when applied to Aboriginal peoples. For a variety of socio-economic reasons, Aboriginal people are over-represented in our jails and are not being rehabilitated. "It is time to try something new and imaginative," says Starlight. "Whether or not the Peacemaking process will be a viable success remains to be seen. There is much work to be done. Fortunately, the major players seem willing to do it." ♦

Homeless Deaths: Part one

(Research and report by the National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project of the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH). NCH is documenting hate crimes/violence against homeless people.)

Over the next three months **Our Voice** will be running a series on hate crimes against homeless people in the United States. We might ask ourselves why people in Edmonton, in Canada, would want to read such a tragic account of events so far away from us. As our own nation heads into the next century and with more and more people living on the streets than we've ever seen before, we could view this as a warning against the negative attitudes we as a society have toward the homeless and the poor. These bad attitudes purvey dangerous actions toward people who, while they are poor and often destitute, are human beings and are worth every bit as much as anyone else.

Total No. of Dead in 1999: 29

Total No. of Victims who Suffered Non-Lethal Violence: 6

No. of Cities Where Murders Occurred: 11 (Anchorage, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Jeffersonville (IN), Los Angeles, Portland (OR), Rapid City (SD), Richmond (VA) San Francisco, and Seattle.

Age Range of Accused/Convicted: 14 years of age (two), 16, 17, 18 (three), 19 (four) 20 (two), 21, 28, 29, 32, and 38

Age Range of Victims: 4 months old, 17, 23, 26, 28, 39 (two), 40, 42, 43, 46, 50, 51, 52, 55 and 62

Sex of Victims: Male: 27 Female: 8

The cities and the deaths

Denver (Fall)

Seven Homeless Men Killed. Two Were Beheaded.

Seven homeless men have been found dead in Denver in the trendy Lower Downtown district. Two were beheaded. All of the men were beaten to death, one so savagely that his skull was in pieces. And at least two others were severely beaten.

The discovery of the battered bodies of seven homeless men has Denver police investigating whether the rash of slayings is the work of a serial killer preying on homeless people. Police said that the circumstances "certainly appear to be similar" in the fatal beatings.

Police have blamed some of the violence on "mall rats," groups of young men and women who gather near the trendy downtown shopping district known as the 16th Street Mall. Many, like the victims, are homeless.

A new wave of fear is passing through Denver's homeless community with the discovery of these two additional homeless men who were beheaded. Homeless people armed themselves with knives, pipes and railroad spikes after hearing the news of the two latest deaths.

"You can tell there's a lot of concern now," said Del Maxfield of the Denver Rescue Mission. "First there were three bodies, then four, then five, and now there are two more. So it's a pretty shocking thing for everybody."

In early November, police arrested seven young men, all between the ages of 16 and 21, and charged them with assault and robbery in attacks on a street musician and homeless man. Two are also suspected in one of the murders. Two men, ages 18 and 20, and a 16-year-old boy have been charged with first-degree murder in one of the fatal beatings. The defendants are part of a clique police call "mall rats," who hang out around Denver's busy 16th Street Pedestrian Mall. Five others have been charged on assault charges for nonfatal beatings.

Shortly after their arrest, two more men were found dead and beheaded.

The most persistent street rumour is that a pack of young men is picking on homeless people for sick thrills. In the only case so far with a witness, someone told the police that several juvenile male suspects were seen beating a homeless man in a downtown alley in early September.

They "may get a sort of high or thrill by beating up people, and homeless are such an easy target," said Police Lt. Judith Will. "It's sad and tragic."

One of the victims, she said, compared a recent beating to "being attacked by a pack of hyenas."

"Don't they know we are real people?" asked Bill Dennis, a 59-year-old Navy veteran who has been homeless for four years.

Jeff Chase of the Denver Voice, a street newspaper, wrote: "Jon Benet is not the only unsolved killing on the Front Range. Unlike the death of the blond little girl, though, there will be no secret grand jury, national media circus or finger-pointing Governor for these five. Only the drawers of the morgue, and then a quiet burial."

John Parvensky, director of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, said, "It is just as important to find and bring the killers to justice as it is to find the murderer of Jon-Benet Ramsey."

An anonymous donor has offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to the capture and conviction of the killer or killers.

"In Denver, whether one is living in a shelter or one is living in a palatial home, life is important. It is critical that we find out who murdered these individuals," said Denver Mayor Wellington Webb.

"The deaths of seven homeless men have left our community in a state of disbelief. We were really taken aback when the two other bodies were found," said Mayor Webb who has asked U.S. Attorney Janet Reno to provide FBI resources for the investigation.

(to be continued)

How does a poor person get a lawyer?

Rodney Graham

In our society the poor may not be represented adequately and some say they have little power or voice when they are in legal difficulty.

A poor person with little or no funds to obtain a lawyer must rely on the "Legal Aid" system. It may be hard to find adequate counsel this way - but not impossible.

The Legal Aid system handles cases on behalf of the poor and the government pays for it. Many lawyers in the legal aid system are "on the way up" and are often inexperienced advocates.

The cream of the crop often gravitates away from legal aid cases which pay less than the corporate and high finance cases.

How to get a lawyer

If you been charged with an offense it is extremely important to get legal counsel immediately. If the police have arrested you they will give you a number to call to contact a free legal aid lawyer. It is your right to speak to a lawyer any time you are arrested whether you have money or not.

After you are released or after you have been charged with a crime it is time to shop around for a reputable lawyer. Do not get one from the phone book or advertisements - these are self-professed areas of expertise and are not reliable sources of information. Shop around through friends and relatives. Never accept a referral from a professional. Professionals have a vested interest - they often obtain

a gratuity for referring clients to lawyers. The ability of the lawyer is not their concern.

Types of charges

There are three main types of charges:

Indictable: This is known in the U.S. as a felony which is usually the most serious of charges.

Summary: This is less serious, but may require a lawyer.

Hybrid: This charge may be either indictable or summary.

If you are charged with an indictable offense you should seek legal counsel immediately. If you try and defend yourself, the crown (prosecution) will eat you alive. You simply will not have the ability to deal with it.

When seeing a legal aid lawyer you should shop around. The lawyer should have a plan of action or a possible solution at the very first meeting with you. If s/he doesn't, it means they are either not aware of one or they are overworked and don't have the time to spend with you. Many legal aid lawyers are overworked. If they are, seek another lawyer.

You have the right to change lawyers

Keep close tabs on your lawyer and call him about the case. If he is unwilling to return phone calls or meet with you this may be an indication he is fudging on your case. He may be overworked or seeking more work out of it. (More time on the case). More time often equals more money.

The idea of justice is often lost in the jargon (legalese) which the lawyer learns in law school and skillfully uses to wrap an intricate web of stark black and white facts into an argument (case)...and in the justice system JUSTICE has nothing to do with the

TRUTH.

FACTS... and how the lawyer uses them are what the judge will consider.

Upon this recipe the judge then renders a decision. The FACTS point to justice (as contained in the law books).

So be sure your lawyer has all the facts. Be sure your lawyer has obtained all the information that is needed for the judge to render a decision. Be sure your lawyer has all the facts the opposition has. It is your right to have all the information the police have concerning your case - and all the information the crown has.

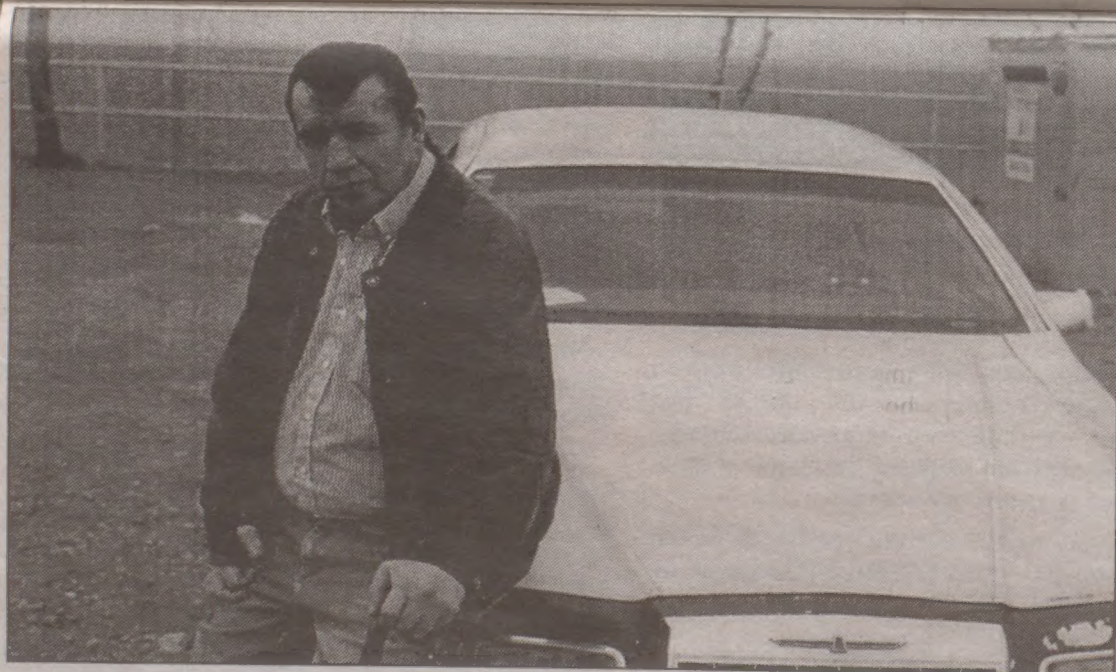
Representing yourself

Never represent yourself if you have been charged with an indictable offense. If you are charged with a summary conviction you can obtain information from your local library or law school. Start by researching textbooks on the subject (what you're charged with) - then read the legislation that applies to the case.

To determine what "legal procedure" and documents are necessary, go to your nearest courthouse and ask the registrar or clerk. They will be more than happy to help you prepare the document. You can also consult your State/Provincial "Rules of Court" that will guide you in the proper steps to take.

After you get the feel of the law and procedure you need to prepare your "argument". You can also obtain information from your opposition lawyer as well. They are obliged to give their information.

With an enthusiastic lawyer, you stand a fair chance to have a fair trial. ♦



On the road again

At age 50, Orville Collins is a very sober man. He is also still partially crippled from a fateful car crash years ago. Drunk and driving, he broke his neck and paralyzed himself from the neck down for four months. Orville still wears a brace on his right arm. And he walks with a stilted shuffle. But he is alive, and thankful to be so. This gives him the chance to help those who have alcohol and drug related problems.

"That accident 31 years ago really put the brakes on my drinking," says Orville. "Something about a broken neck and not being able to walk does that to you." He grins wryly.

Orville was born in Elk Point (about 40 miles south

of Cold Lake) in 1949. He comes from a family of eight brothers and 3 sisters. Both his father and mother and three of his brothers are dead now. "I've lived in Edmonton for the last 32 years. I've gone through various phases of healing, first physically, then mentally and spiritually. It was a long process. For quite a while I was down on myself for my stupidity. And it took me a long time to accept the long range consequences of my drinking, even though I was only 19 when the accident happened. I will be physically crippled for the rest of my life. That was one hard pill to swallow. Couldn't be normal. Would have to drag myself around as a cripple. Got right down on myself and thought lots of negative things about life and people and myself. But the self pity had to stop in order for me to get a better hold on life and a grip on what I wanted to do with my future. That is, when I realized that even as a crippled person that I could have a future.

"First I had to learn, with the help of others, how to let go of my anger and frustration and resentment at the world of 'normals'. Then I had to accept the limi-

tations of my paralysis and the guilt of what I once thought was a wasted life. This all didn't happen overnight. I spent a lot of time on the streets as a drunk. But I've been sober these last 15 years, without regret.

"At one point I felt strong enough to continue a disrupted education. I'd only finished grade ten as a kid. To think of continuing and building up the necessary mental steam to do so took me until 1988, at which time I entered a two year social work program at Grant MacEwan College. I got my diploma. And that's when things started turning around for me. I learned that I had the ability to help others simply by telling them my story, that I had insights that I could share with others -- insights that might help them in their struggles with life.

So I became a drug-alcohol counselor and I now travel around the province to schools and facilities in that capacity.

In 1993 "I learned that with determination I could draw. I could also write. If anyone asks me now what I do in my spare time, I tell them that I write, write, write and draw, draw, draw." Orville laughs. "I do it for the healing," he adds.

Asked what he intends to do with the rest of his life, Orville is quick to reply: "I want to become an accomplished and published writer, both poems and songs. I have a musical streak in me. Also, I want to pass on to others healing messages, stuff I've learned through my own dealings with life. Last, I want to remain as independent as possible, given my physical limitations."

Orville drives again. A yellow Thunderbird. As he gets into his car he tells me, "You know, you gotta be good to yourself and give yourself a chance. And be a light traveler. I don't like to carry baggage around." ♦

Tom Hind

Making sense of justice

line I done something wrong and got sent to the penitentiary. I was buried alive....Turn to the right it was a wall. Turn to the left it was a wall. Look up it was a ceiling. Look down it was a floor. I forget what I done, lady, I set there and set there, trying to remember what it was I done and I ain't recalled it to this day. Once in awhile, I'd think it was coming to me but it never come."

F. O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

Sam told me he had spent fifteen years in prison. "It's like them out there," he said gesturing toward the street, "they fight each other and they don't even know why. One minute you'll be drinking and everything is fine and the next minute a fight will break out. Something will happen and you'll be in jail for five years and you won't even remember what started it. Three minutes of your life . . . and five years." He shakes his head and stares at the pictures on the wall...

Sam is over forty now. Sometimes he is drunk and sometimes he is sober. Sometimes he is homeless and sometimes he has a room of his own. Sometimes he comes in to talk to me, but always he seems to be wondering, waiting for some missing piece of the puzzle to fall into place.

"I said long ago, you get you a signature and sign everything you do and keep a copy of it. Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment and see do they match and in the end you'll have something to prove you ain't been treated right. I call myself The Misfit," he said, "because I can't make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment....does it seem right to you, lady, that one is punished a heap and another ain't punished at all?"

F. O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

Sam panhandles by the Hotel MacDonald, watching the Jaguars and limos drive up. He has followed people right up to the door only to be chased off by the doorman who doesn't want his kind around. "The rooms there are \$250 a night," he says in disbelief, "One lady asked me to help her with her bags. I would love to do that, but I had to tell her they wouldn't let me in there. She didn't understand that."

I think about Sam a lot. There is so little meanness in him, so little indignation, just a resigned puzzlement. He reminds me of words I used to hear when I was a child in church - "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right, they shall be satisfied. Happy are those who mourn, they shall be comforted." He reminds me of a hope I have in myself that those words are true, and that what little I or anyone else can do for Sam now is just a shadow of what will be done for him. He reminds me that the justice we look for now is just an echo in our souls of a larger justice, a justice that takes all things into account and rewards with true rewards and punishes with true punishment. Because, like Sam, I have trouble making sense of the world without that possibility, and it is difficult, without the help of drugs or alcohol, to live in a world where justice seems so hard to find.

Pass me the Big Bear.

"None, I ain't a good man," The Misfit said after a second as if he had considered her statement carefully, "But I ain't the worst in the world neither. My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my bothers and sisters. 'You know,' Daddy said, 'it's some that can live their whole life without asking about it and it's others has to know why it is, and this boy is one of the latters. He's going to be into everything.'"

Flannery O'Connor 'A Good Man is Hard to Find'

Sam sat in my office, slouched in his chair, his hands between his knees. Sometimes he'd look at me, but mostly he'd stare at the pictures on the wall, as if he was trying to find something in them that made sense. He talked slowly telling a story that, even though he had told it many times before, was still a mystery to him, a fairy tale or a nightmare. At certain points he winced and shifted in his chair, but nothing stopped the flow of words. They washed over me in images, beautiful and horrific, that stayed with me long after Sam himself was gone. It wasn't that I hadn't heard sad stories before, but there was something in the gentle perplexity of the telling, the look

on the face of a man who had almost, but not quite, given up trying to understand why.

The first ten years of Sam's life, he lived with his family, the eldest of three children in northern Saskatchewan, beyond the reach of roads. He remembers the log cabin, the warm fires and hard work. He remembers one of the last things his mother said to him before she died - "I can forgive then for what they've done to me, but what have they done to my children?" He remembers the day his life changed forever. While walking home from town with her children, Sam's mother was attacked by two men who raped and beat her. She died a day later on the plane to Saskatoon. The two younger children were taken immediately, but Sam stayed with his father for the winter. When spring came a man from the government came with it. It was illegal for Sam to miss school. His father argued that he would teach his son to hunt and trap, to follow in his footsteps, but that wasn't the kind of education they had in mind. So, at ten years of age, Sam was taken from his home to Regina, but he couldn't stay. He ran. "By the time I was fifteen I was shackled up with a sixteen year old girl on a reserve near Calgary."

"I never was a bad boy that I remember of," the Misfit said in an almost dreamy voice, "but somewhere along the

(Humatirian continued from page 8)

Organized crime was created out of poverty. Today what we see on our streets is a territorial drug war, among kids and adults. When kids are recruited into the drug trade two things happen. One, the under aged children receive little or no attention, the majority of kids receive probation fines (restoration), in the courts. In this business, just like probation, children find easy access to money to buy cigarettes, clothing and food. I personally know of a 16 year old youth selling drugs just to support himself and pay part of the rent and know personally that his mother is medically unable to support her family on a pension. I

think people will be surprised to know that there are more people walking around who have been refused jobs and have been fired from their jobs because of drug convictions than the number of people who have turned out for national elections.

At one time prostitution used to consist of pimps and staples. A staple is where you have 2 or 3 girls working for you on the streets. Today, because of poverty, you now have a number of freelancers, a very large number of people under the age of 18, not only girls but guys, who are working the streets to supplement their incomes. They are those who are working to support a drug habit and some who are forced to pay a drug debt. On the flip side of this is today you are finding single underage mothers who are working the streets to pay for diapers, rent, food, clothing, util-

ity bills and trying to keep their family unit together. It seems that every so many years someone takes up the banner to fight prostitution and tougher laws. So then they toughen the prostitution law and the judge receives a 5% wage increase.

Right now our jails are over-flowing with people who know which crimes to commit to keep themselves fed and warm during the winter. Because of poverty and social issues, law abiding citizens are caught in a trap of doing things they thought they would never do. In a country like Canada it is shameful that crime has to become a lifestyle in order to afford food, clothing and shelter and to raise a family.

◆

Poetry from death row

These poems, along with hundreds of others, can be found on this website for the Canadian Coalition Against the Death Penalty at: <http://www.ccadp.com>

MORNING SUN

Morning sun arise
So do I
Blue skies turn grey
Sadness comes my way
Life is a mystery
Happiness isn't always there
That's just a few facts of life
But I want you to know I care.

LIFE FOR YOU

I got a life for you
If we ever get connected
The things you'll have
Is the unexpected
Your heart and soul
Will be selected
The life you live
You'll never regret
God's grace and glory
Will forever protect...

Frank Dean Carter is on Death Row in California

A True Friend

People search the world over for a true friend who
they can always count on.
Someone they can honestly confide with,
But most attempts seem to fail;
often getting hurt with nowhere to turn.
Left wondering where to find a genuine true friend ?
It's found in communication and listening to one another
with an open heart.
By being attentive to one's feelings and allowing each other
to be themselves with openness of expression without
judging or accusing.
It's found by graciously giving of oneself and allowing
each other to be completely at ease with one another.
It's with kindness, caring, understanding, and most of all -
It's trusting in one another to share life's ups, downs,
fears, ideas, hopes and dreams.
" True friends last forever " !!!

Frank Walls is on Death Row in Florida

Love

What is love when love is blind.
What is peace, when love is mine.
Love is there when you are gone
Love is age so far beyond
Love is feeling, love is taste
Love is kept in a secret place.
Or is it love or is it lust ?
Visualize what's between us.

Frank Walls is on Death Row in Florida

Frank Walls is on Death Row in Florida

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Watch for
our February/March feature
on Poverty Law being sold
by **Our Voice** vendors,
February 1, 2000

In the months of February and March, **Our Voice** and Law Now magazine will be teaming up to continue the fight against poverty.

LawNow's February/March issue will be focused on poverty law and it is with great enthusiasm that **Our Voice** teams up with the folks at Law Now to deliver their publication into your hands.

During the months of February and March, **Our Voice** vendors will be selling Law Now Magazine along with their copies of **Our Voice**, the spare change magazine.

The vendors will pay \$1 for each copy of Law Now and sell them for \$5. This income will contribute to helping many of Edmonton's marginalized citizens toward self reliance and economic stability.

Thank You for supporting **Our Voice**.



It wasn't a riot- but a REVOLUTION

Brian Welling traveled to the WTO Conference in Seattle and
comments on his experience.

photos by George Hickey

It's not often that 50,000 people gather in the streets for a common cause unless of course their team has won the Stanley Cup. But what happened in Seattle the week of November 30th was not the drunken clamor of the masses looking for a bigger herd to be BAAAAAD and boisterous with. Seattle, was instead, an outpouring of intelligent, genuine people from all over the world expressing their passionate concerns for life on Earth.

There was another group in Seattle that week, as well, vying just as hard for a different cause. They were the delegates of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO is a global conglomerate of 135 countries seeking to hammer out deals that would render trade between countries free of import and export taxes and other barriers. When put in these terms, free trade sounds like a pretty noble, or at least benign cause, doesn't it? Well it's not. This becomes clearer when one examines what is meant by the term "barrier" to trade.

Let's say a member country gets the crazy notion that certain things are just too precious to be sold off merely to the highest bidder. Perhaps that country decides to enact a law that would protect its forests, for example. (Please note: Forest are those green, pokey areas still remaining in a few spots on Earth. Among their many offerings is my personal favourite, the one that allows human beings to have something to breathe.) An example of a forest protection law is one which institutes mandatory labeling on all wood products. This allows potential consumers to know if the trees that go into a product have been harvested with ecological sustainability in mind or with short term profit as the guiding principle. Well guess what? Under the WTO's proposed Global Logging Agreement, this type of law could be considered a barrier to trade and such, a violation of WTO's rules.

That's just one teeny-tiny example of the many threats the WTO poses to the environment (that is, to your ability to survive). But the WTO's definition of

trade barriers does not end at environmental protection laws. Government funding to Public Health and to Public Education can also be construed as a barrier to trade because it is said to unfairly discriminate against private enterprise. That is true but some people believe that public services are better able to serve the common good because they do not have to put profit above service. Private enterprise, if it is to survive always has to put profit first.



A good example of the hazards of putting profits first can be seen in the area of labour and human rights. Corporations which are big enough to operate out of a number of different countries are called Multinationals or TransNational corporations. Many of them, like Nike, the Gap, WalMart and Disney take advantage of lax labour laws in poor nations. By hiring people in these nations to manufacture their goods, corporations are able to pay sub-living wages to these desperate people and have them work in cheaper to operate (read harsher to work under) conditions. The Multinationals then take their savings and pass them on in three ways. 1) They pay their executives exorbitantly. The average CEO makes 419 times what the average line worker makes. The CEO of Gap made \$47.1 million in 1998. Gap workers in Honduras make 50 cents per hour. 2) They pay celebrities and advertis-

ing agencies huge dollars to make slick, effective advertisements. 3) They sell their goods to you and I, the grateful and ignorant consumers at a bargain.

When one US state tried to pass a law banning business's dealings with corporations who were taking advantage of the poor people of Burma, this too was seen as a trade barrier under WTO rules and was struck down.

It is for these reasons and many others that people gathered in Seattle to oppose the WTO. (I don't suppose you heard that on too many TV stations.) But it wasn't merely the WTO we were opposing. Seattle marked the first time in history that people from dozens of different movements - from the environment to labour, from human rights to animal rights, from Paganism to Christianity - recognized full on that each of their causes were connected. We recognized that our causes are connected and so is our geography. It matters not if we are workers in the Honduras or workers in Canada. If exploitation exists there, exploitation exists here. It matters not if your water is being poisoned in India or if your soil is being eroded in Brazil. We breathe the same air, eat from the same earth, drink the same water. This is one world. Globalization is not what we're opposed to. Globalization is a fact. It's corporate globalization that we reject and the notion that it should take 1/4 of a billion of the world's poorest people's combined annual income to match the net worth of the world's six richest people.

What we are against however is not nearly as important as what we are for. Seattle may have been the war zone where my friend was bombarded by a nerve gas to the point of being forced into a hospital back home but it was also a peace zone. Seattle may have been the place where I narrowly avoided being pepper sprayed and hit with a billy club but it was also the place where I sang until I was hoarse and danced until I was dizzy. Seattle was the place where hundreds of people were fed a free meal each day by Food Not Bombs, not for any one's profit, but for everyone's benefit. Seattle was the place where a thousand people joined hands around a prison to show solidarity for the people inside. It's also the place where blocks of people gave the peace sign to law enforcement authorities whose comrades brutalized them only the day before.

As for the rioting and looting in Seattle, I think two stores had some coffee beans or other such things stolen from them. As for the revolution, if you haven't felt it yet, you will. ♦

Cec Garfin on the

STREET SEEN

The world Philia is a Greek word meaning love. For the individuals involved with the Philia Advocacy Group, love is their work and is important to the people they help.

There are four people who have, combined, more than sixty years experience in the areas of advocacy, food security, social justice, resource finding and referral, employment assistance programming, chaplaincy, criminal justice, addictions, interpersonal and family violence, mental health, individual and family support.

These four people worked in various capacities at the Mustard Seed Church up to 1998. Linda Foy shared responsibility for The Food Depot and Advocacy, from 1994 to 1998. Leslie Regelous, Chaplain at the University of Alberta, was the Associate Pastor at the Suburban Parish from 1992 to 1998 and was responsible for the development and operation of the Food Depot and Advocacy Services at the Mustard Seed in Edmonton's downtown. Laurie LaFleur has worked in the inner city for over 15 years. From 1980 to 1989 he

was an Executive Assistant at Hope Mission. From 1990 to 1998 he served as Executive Director and Chaplain at the Mustard Seed Church. Also there is Jim Hawley who has a Masters Degree in Social Work and is a teacher in Wetaskawin.

Specific help has been given to individuals who have had problems with the justice system, police and courts, landlords, employers, neighbours, doctors, etc. They boast a high success rate in problem solving.

Philia being a non-profit group, does not charge a fee for their services. They do accept donations and can issue a charitable receipt income for tax purposes.

The Philia Advocacy Group is located at 10306 95th Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5H 2B5. Phone (780) 425-1472. Fax (780) 425-2138. ♦

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Best Wishes
for a Happy New Year
from your friends at
Alberta's Official Opposition



George Haraida

George has been vending **Our Voice** since early in December of last year.

A recent Citizen of the month, George decided to begin selling **Our Voice** as a way of further being involved in social causes.

"I figure it's good to get involved. I do lots of volunteer work and this will help me out financially as well," he says.

George is vending **Our Voice** downtown and in

the Kingsway area.

George's prediction for this century:

In 2013 the earth will shift and cause severe changes in the atmosphere. There will be a major panic and many deaths.

Editors note. Gee. I hope not.

**VENDOR
Profile**

EVERY Authorized
vendor has a
BADGE!

**Our
Voice**



V
E
N
D
O
R
B
A
D
G
E

Vendor Name _____

Number _____

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OUR VOICE VENDOR'S CODE

- I will be sober at all times while working.
- I will be polite to all members of the public.
- I will vend only in areas that are authorized.

CITIZEN OF THE MONTH



Ken MacKrimmon

Ken values people more than money. Ken is a jack of all trades. He worked in the computer information service business and for a Real Estate Appraiser in both Edmonton & Calgary for 10 years. He started the Hinton Herald and the Jasper Totem Newspapers.

These days Ken is committed to providing an alternative to the present economic system. Ken's idea is to put the power back to the worker, with his project the Alberta job Creation Institute.

"The biggest hurdle became finding space where rent wouldn't be a burden. I needed a location close to the inner city which I found," he said.

The objective would be to start with 2 employees, paid on a piece basis for the repair and restoration of damaged furniture. The requirement of employees is they have hand skills and they want a future that they can control. ♦

Cec Garfin

Café Mosaics

**Our Voice Magazine
and Café Mosaics'
Citizen of the Month**

EVERY MONTH in **Our Voice**, we will be featuring someone who has gone the extra kilometre in their lives or in their careers to make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate.

The Citizen of the Month will receive a dinner for two courtesy of the Garneau Café Mosaics on Whyte Avenue.

HAPPY PAGE



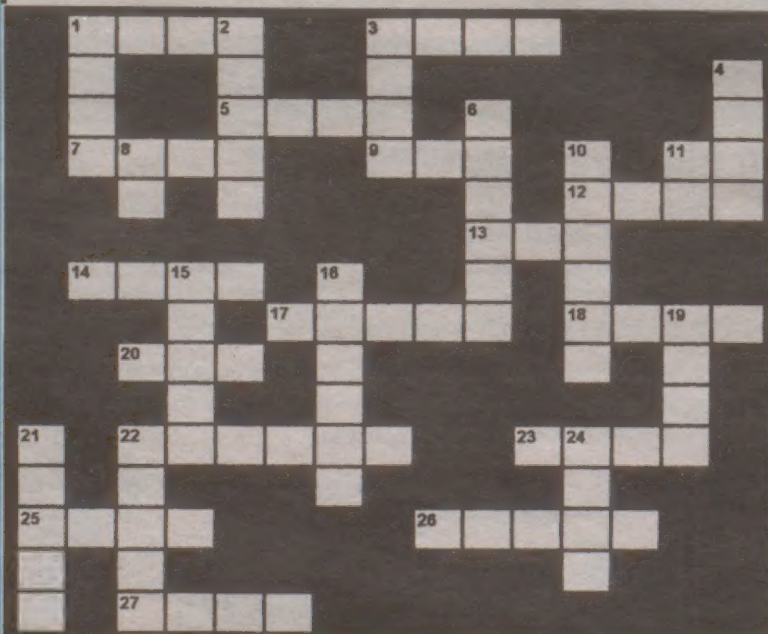
Pete's Scrabble Crossword

ACROSS

- 1) Eloped with the spoon
- 3) Fix the road
- 4) Adolescent
- 7) Nod off
- 9) Farm female
- 11) At home
- 12) Unclothed
- 13) Not so soft drink
- 14) Layer of paint
- 17) Train type
- 18) Knocks lightly
- 20) Dish soap
- 22) Restaurant staff
- 23) Farmyard foot
- 25) Baby tulip
- 26) Eatery
- 27) Bed for 25 Across

DOWN

- 1) Expired
- 2) Heartbreak
- 3) Yearn
- 4) Out of town
- 6) Not quite
- 8) ___ else
- 10) Cell occupant
- 11) Personality part
- 15) Pleasant smell
- 16) A big hole
- 19) Magic dragon
- 21) Teases
- 22) Ambulates
- 24) Beasts of burden



Thank You to:
Volunteers for Christmas Party
 Holy Spirit Lutheran Church with
 Mills and Carole Parker
 Rev. Faith Brace
 Calvin Kennedy
 Earl Preddy
 Betty Nordin
 Laurette Hines
 Robin and Maryann Parris-Korne

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